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# An Aboriginal College for a return to Country: Designing a school that prepares children to live in two worlds and the space between

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*This paper details the lived experience of the author as an education consultant from the mainstream of Australian education, attempting to assist a remote Aboriginal corporation establish its own secondary school, in its own cultural context on its own land. It is about the experience of an Anglo Australian servant of an Aboriginal corporation. The perspective is that of an outside employee. The paper is not a treatise on Aboriginal education. It does not seek to advance an Aboriginal point of view.*

*Keywords: Aboriginal education; remote education; Return to Country*

## INTRODUCTION

The Kunapa families are the traditional Aboriginal owners in the Western Barkly Tablelands of Central Australia and are part of the Warumungu language group. Their land includes areas of the Banka Banka, Brunchilly, and Elroy Downs Perpetual Pastoral Leases, and the Warumungu Aboriginal Land Trust. The families' business arm is the Manungurra Aboriginal Corporation (MAC). Their culture is alive and strong. Their languages, Warumungu and Warlmumpa, are in daily use. Their culture and languages have been the subject of extensive academic work, the results of which are available to support the provision of schooling for their children but to date this resource has been ignored by schools. Simpson, in her 2006 article *Bush School: The Warlmumpa and the Bakers*, laments the lack of Warumungu input into local education.

MAC (ICN 4694) is incorporated under the Corporation (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006. Its objectives are to relieve poverty, assist members to fulfil their responsibilities under Aboriginal tradition and to undertake a range of social, cultural and economic activities. It has nine directors and 70 members, the majority of whom live in the region. It manages the receipts, distribution to members and the investment of mining royalties paid to it through the Central Land Council.

At a Community Planning Workshop at Banka Banka 14-18 July 2012, some 70 Kunapa families, who form the MAC, decided on a plan to move out of Tennant Creek and back onto Country, establish a number of businesses in cattle, agriculture and tourism, and to gain further employment opportunities in the mine which is operating on their land. They decided that it

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was unrealistic to plan to move back onto Country unless education could be guaranteed that would equip their children to participate fully in their planned ventures. They saw the founding of their own school as a way to achieve this and ensure the continuance of their Warumungu language and culture. In November the MAC engaged me to assist in the preparation of a submission to the Northern Territory Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS) seeking to register their own independent boarding school. This paper seeks to present the lived experience of my task. My approach was to carry out a mission analysis of the determinations of the Banka Banka meeting as a lead into a scoping study. The scoping study needed to be grounded in the economic realities of the proposed return to Country without which the success of the proposed school would lack purpose. It also needed to heed Foucault (1972), by my loosely adopting the Marxist belief that economic conditions determine social and political life and thus determine the nature of social institutions. In conducting this scoping study, I sought to determine the size and composition of the proposed student body. Also, I sought to elicit foundational planning information from various Kunapa families concerning possible physical and socio-cultural locations and the culture and education philosophy they required to determine the nature of the proposed school.

## **SCOPING THE TASK**

### **Determining the kind of school**

The initial demand from the Banka Banka meetings appeared to be for a 'transition to Year 12' boarding school. I argued strongly that a Primary boarding school was out of the question for two reasons: First, there would be no government support for primary age boarders and, second, meeting the duty of care requirements for primary age children was likely to be beyond the school's capabilities. I was helped in the 'no primary school' arguments by the fact that there was an existing government primary school at Wogayala that children might attend; such attendance could be supported by the provision of family-based boarding. In light of these circumstances, the decision was made to plan for a Years 7 to 12 boarding school to be called 'Manungurra College'.

Following discussions that narrowed the education planning task to the provision of secondary education, I sought to define the school's likely student population. Like all registered Northern Territory (NT) schools, the proposed Manungurra College would be required to be open to all comers regardless of religion, culture or language but in this case, as in faith-based schools, priority in enrolment could be given to students from a Warumungu background. The MAC Board indicated they would exercise this right of priority.

My first task was to estimate the make-up of the proposed school by way of numbers, present location, age, grade, previous school experience and language. Establishing numbers and current locations was relatively easy. We knew where the member families lived from MAC records. Of the Warumungu students to be enrolled, a few, perhaps a dozen, would come from families who spend most of their time in remote areas of the Barkly and, regardless of age, have had little schooling. Based on current Wogayala Primary School enrolments, two or three a year would come from that school although that number would increase once Wogayala College was in operation and staff children swelled the size of Wogayala School Primary. My second and more controversial task was to estimate the educational needs of the proposed school's clientele. Students from Wogayala Primary were likely to be the best secondary students as it has had some success in meeting national education benchmarks. The majority of students for the new boarding school, however, would come from Tennant Creek. These

prospective students would come from families returning to Country and would experience dislocation issues.

The new school would initially have to cope with students from a town with a long history of educational dysfunction. Tennant Creek is a place where there has been a history of disengagement from education. Diane Bell's (2002) research suggests disengagement of long standing, going back to the 1940s and 50s and peoples' early contact with education. She described a legacy of educational distrust in the following terms: "One legacy of the Phillip Creek (mission) experience is fearful attitudes towards school and fearful expectations of schools as white institutions" (p. 77). Two recent Regional Directors had commissioned me to investigate poor secondary school attendance in the region (Baker, 2008; Baker, 2012). Recent concerns about disengagement and absenteeism among secondary students in Tennant Creek have caused both the DECS and Julikarie, an Aboriginal corporation with local government functions, to commission secondary school engagement studies in 2012. The results of these studies have not been made public but I was familiar with them from time spent employed in the Barkly Region Education Office. Also, I gained the contextual knowledge from previous experience as a school principal of three schools in the Barkly Region, from personal observation on the streets of Tennant Creek, and through discussion with community members. Reading both old and contemporary studies led me to assume that any planned school could expect its enrolling students to have had previous histories of disengagement from school and to be, on average, three years behind national norms for their age. I concluded that MAC's school design needed to cater to an initial student body with significant educational deficits, health, and, possibly, substance abuse issues. I knew that the Aboriginal education scene is littered with failures and that fear of failure could paralyse planning but the MAC Board and its CEO were confident that, once students were in a school environment designed to maximize the advantages offered by traditional culture and kinship patterns, the above mentioned deficits could be overcome.

### **Location**

While discussions about the size of the proposed school were in progress, the MAC Board asked me for advice on the location of the proposed school. I analysed a number of possible sites, considering road access, communication links, available infrastructure, and ease of building construction. The Board chose a site I had ruled out because of poor road access and isolation in the wet season. The MAC Board decided to build their school at Wogayala close to Rock Hampton Downs Station. Maps of traditional Aboriginal movement and of modern dry-weather-only dirt roads show that this Kunapa families' land is strategically located with regard to traditional Aboriginal movement patterns and to modern economic and cultural interfaces that have served the people well during the dominance of the cattle industry. Wogayala's strategic value in Aboriginal terms was of more value to my clients than were other locations' ease of construction and operation. In briefing me on their decision, Board members emphasized their determination to exploit Wogayala's relationship to their sociocultural and economic patterns and to recreate social connections destroyed by twentieth century settlement patterns associated with pastoral and mining industries and government administrative arrangements. I could subordinate my planning priorities to those of my client for the design phase of the work but I knew that their chosen location decision would make it difficult to make argument for the registration of the school.

### **Defining after school culture**

My clients knew what they wanted from their school. My task was to articulate the education culture for which I was expected to design. My question to my clients was this: How did they expect things would be done around their school and what would life in it be like? During a mission analysis on the 14-18 July 2012 at a Banka Banka meeting addressing outcomes carried out by the consultants Remote Rural Recourses, the MAC Board decided that any new school design must be grounded in Warumungu culture. The MAC Board took the view that their children failed in mainstream schools because the schools failed to accommodate the special circumstances of Warumungu children as they entered adulthood. They contended that in order to be judged a success, their school needed to cater to avoidance patterns and social norms which forbade eye contact or the crossing of paths as well as making provision for initiation and coming of age ceremonies.

The MAC Board's cultural imperative formed the basis of a verbal brief to the project's architect, David Bennett of the firm Bennett Design, from Manungurra's Chief Executive Officer, Graeme Smith, in Adelaide in June 2013. In the introduction to this briefing, the architect and I were warned about being too Anglo-centric and conservative in our thinking. We were told that the proposed school would need to be different, even if the classrooms designed to cope with cultural rules concerning eye contact would resemble the Port Arthur Church where the design allowed members of the congregation to see the minister but not each other. We were told not to disregard an education culture that required that the school's physical and operational design conform to Warumungu cultural practice. I was provided with the school's education culture but translating this culture into a plan for an operational reality was my task. In doing so, I was guided by the Adelaide brief, day-to-day contact with Manungurra's operations manager, Sokar Philips, my own experience of teaching Warumungu and Warlpiri children, and my previous analysis of secondary education in the region (Baker, 2012). My 2008 analysis of the secondary education situation had convinced me of the depth of failure any education plan would need to address. My 2012 analysis led me to agree with Phillpot (2001) that education strategies developed for other Australian minority groups were unlikely to be able to address the society present on the Barkly. My experience as a teacher, which owes a debt to attempts to learn from Gertrude Stott's verbal analysis of Warrego School made on visiting my school in 1999 reinforced the MAC Board members' concerns that the reason schools failed their children was that mainstream Australian school design and operation placed Aboriginal children in impossible socio-cultural situations. Concerning Warrego School Stott had argued that:

In my strife riven playground, the school's behaviour and cohesion problems stemmed from the fact that we were not taking cognizance of social relationships and, in particular Kirda-Kurdungurlu relationships that determine who is responsible for who in the school. Most importantly we were effectively combating the community's key perception of which of our children were responsible for looking after whom and we were asking children and adults to breach avoidance relationships present in the school. In her view we were frustrating the Kirda-Kurdungurlu relationship every time we stopped a child from doing another's work. We set up conflicts when we unknowingly put children in avoidance relationships together or asked a child to help another for whom that child had no traditional responsibility. She explained we created chaos when we asked an older child to show a younger one a skill in a situation where, unbeknown to us, the older child called the younger one 'Mother' (cited in Baker, 2010, p. 207).

### **From Culture to Philosophy**

The rough definition of school culture I used in meetings with MAC Board members was that culture was how things were to be done around the school. The Board and community members

were more than happy to describe how they wanted things done around their school. The definition of school philosophy I presented was that it was the set of reasons why things were done around a school. My scoping requirement was to address the ideas and beliefs my clients wished to see define the school. I was handicapped in achieving this because I came from a world with a different belief system. In addition, all participants in the planning processes were dealing in a context where much knowledge, especially that to do with transition from childhood to adulthood, was a secret within certain individuals. It was with their knowledge, ideas, and beliefs that I sought to underpin the planning for and operation of their kind of school, make it intelligible and marketable to the NT Government and to the wider education community.

Working from their description of the culture required for the proposed school, it was agreed with the MAC Board that the philosophy that would inform teaching and learning at a future MAC-owned College would be one in which the whole teaching and learning environment would be structured in such a way as to maximize cultural advantages conferred on students by their background and belief systems and minimize barriers to learning created for them by the post-colonial NT Education Department-specified environment in which the College must inevitably function.

I gained agreement that, for planning and operational purposes, Manungurra College's organizing philosophy would take advantage of Aboriginal relationship patterns to socialize the knowledge, skills and attitudes it intends to teach. At its simplest, this philosophy requires classroom activity groupings and seating patterns that reflect Aboriginal relationships rather than age and ability levels. It requires tutoring and learning groupings that reflect learning patterns found in the student's parent culture. More controversially, it dictates that the structure and supervision of the boarding facility be modelled on traditional living and responsibility patterns. For example, at the extreme, it requires planning for the school to take account of situations where students cannot come into a particular classroom while certain people are present in it or where some adults cannot be on the school grounds when certain other individuals are there.

The adopted philosophy required the development of school protocols that can support learning in complex tradition-based situations. Late in the planning process, the MAC Board, through Sokar Philips their administrator and as a result of discussions of how the architect's preliminary accommodation designs might work, indicated their distrust of teachers' capacity to understand the philosophical basis for authority patterns. They therefore instructed me to redefine the philosophical basis for authority patterns to be created in any new school. In doing so they expressed the view that authority patterns imposed on their young people in mainstream schools lacked legitimacy in the eyes of Warumungu students. They contended that, to be effective and legitimate, authority had to be exercised by those culturally entitled to exercise it. The authority pattern that most concerned them was the "fit" of post ceremony men students into the school. At a practical level, this philosophical stance required the planning for and creation of a school environment where participation in ceremony did not make further participation in western education problematical or indeed impossible. The revised authority patterns demanded by this aspect of education philosophy was also to inform the physical classroom layouts and living quarters design.

The proposed classroom layouts aroused discussion. The living quarter design was to prove unacceptable to those considering the school's application for registration. Despite the requirement that the document requesting the registration of the proposed school required a

philosophy section that appeared definitive, it was inevitable that a philosophy for a school that was yet to be would remain a work in progress during the whole of the planning process and beyond. It was unavoidable that the planning process itself would involve continually revisiting the philosophy and recasting the relationship between the western model of schooling and Warumungu society. The philosophical beginnings outlined above provided a philosophical basis that promised to deliver an education plan for Kunapa families. This plan was to prove unacceptable to the NT Education Department.

## **THE APPROACH TO PLANNING**

With the Warumungu cultural imperative established as the ultimate determining factor in questions of operational and physical design and broad agreement on the elements of an education philosophy to underpin the planning of the proposed school agreed upon with my clients, I took the view that a mission-based approach to planning, oriented to deliver the prioritized cultural and philosophical elements, was most likely to produce a plan. It was a process that required the MAC Board to agree to a vision and a mission for the school to guide me in developing the curriculum, pedagogy and operational planning, and to guide the architect in building design. The statements agreed for planning purposes are set out below.

### **Vision**

The vision adopted was of a school that makes a successful return to Country possible by delivering the education required by the Australian curriculum in a Kunapa context and in a way which produces individuals who can be successful in two worlds and in the space between them. The vision is of a network centric, full service, residentially based school empowered by information technology that makes it possible for Kunapa children to receive a mainstream Australian Curriculum based education on their own lands that prepares them to be successful in the world of their own culture, language and economy and in the world of the wider culture, language and economy of Australia.

### **Mission**

The College's mission is to contribute to the achievement of Manungurra's total vision for the Kunapa families by the delivery of the NT's version of the Australian Curriculum to the children of the Kunapa families on their own Country and in the cultural and pedagogic context of a Warumungu boarding middle and senior school that is attuned to the social, cultural and economic realities of Australia's Territory, national and regional contexts.

### **An Operational Concept**

With a vision and mission agreed upon, I began a process of consultation on an operational concept. An agreement was quickly reached. The concept involved the College achieving its mission by the establishment of a centrally located middle and senior boarding school campus to serve Kunapa secondary students from across the region. The concept envisaged the school achieving its mission by the application of mainstream and Indigenous pedagogies that exploit in full the opportunities provided by specifically designed culturally effective classrooms, boarding house, external learning environments, the world of virtual education and the world of Warumungu tradition, language, and culture.

The concept required the provision of locally designed and programmed full-service schooling to students from Years 7 - 9 in multi-grade/multi-age team-taught classrooms. It involved the provision of full-service schooling to Year 10, 11, and 12 students jointly enrolled with Northern Territory Open Education Centre (NTOEC). Implementation required a human resources policy that provided appropriate cultural representation at all points of each student's education. Input from those charged by tradition with the upbringing of young people demanded that the College's Middle and Senior School's common culture and learning environment be sufficiently differentiated to cater to their different student bodies as they progress through their traditional journey to adulthood. This requirement meant that the College would need to develop and maintain a capacity for complex programming which could only be commenced once the composition of the school's population for any given year was known and might be subjected to traditional analysis.

Wider discussion within the Kunapa community of the operational concept led to the demand for a remote student support unit and a knowledge centre. The design and role of these elements is not discussed here beyond noting that it is intended that having adult learners and creators of knowledge on campus will provide valuable role models for younger students. Input from remote Kunapa families as they reviewed the emerging design demanded that the College create the capacity to network the College's offerings for the benefit of all Kunapa students, regardless of location.

### **THE DESIGN CHALLENGE**

The design challenge created by this mission based planning was six fold, involving:

- An architectural challenge of designing for Warumungu living and teaching space that might be utilized to deliver western education to the satisfaction of the community and the NT Government. This was taken up by Bennett Design;
- A curriculum design challenge which was complicated by the fact that NT Education was in transition between the Northern Territory Curriculum Framework (NTCF) and the Australian Curriculum (Australian Curriculum). It was a challenge that required me to enlist the help of Chloe Parkinson, a PhD candidate at the University of New England and a former NT Remote teacher working and researching the applicability of the Australian Curriculum to remote Aboriginal communities;
- A pedagogy design challenge;
- A human resources policy challenge to create a bicultural staff;
- A challenge for MAC management to identify funding to run an untried complex organization that could not be optimized in terms of size; and
- The over-arching challenge of achieving NT registration for an untried, unconventional independent school.

### **THE CURRICULUM CHALLENGE**

My colleague Chloe Parkinson and I were confronted with the task of designing a curriculum for Manungurra College at a pivotal period in curriculum development and application in the NT as education in the Territory moved away from its transformational outcomes based curriculum, the NTCF, and began to adopt the Australian Curriculum. We dealt with the medium term situation by developing curriculum policy robust enough to inform planning in the areas of architecture, pedagogy, human resources and administration, and governance. For

our request for registration we detailed what the curriculum situation in the proposed College might look like on start-up.

### **Curriculum Policy**

The curriculum planning policy which we developed was based on the NT Department of Education's prediction on curriculum requirements in the NT on the envisaged College opening date of January 2015. We designed policy to accommodate the period of change referenced to that date. Our policy intention was to have the College begin its operation delivering an education program that would base the teaching of English, mathematics, science and history on the DECS interpretation of the Australian Curriculum. It would include the remaining four learning areas common to NT schools on those sections of the NTCF that remained operational and in force in Territory schools.

As a way of meeting its obligations to government, community and its students and deliver the necessary "survival ways of knowing," our planned policy called for Manungurra College to teach Indigenous Language and Culture while possible under the aegis of the NTCF while that remains a possibility. At the same time we planned for the College to take full advantage of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and culture cross-curriculum priority inherent in the Australian Curriculum to lead students to understandings of how they might create meaning for themselves as an encapsulated postcolonial society in the Warumungu world, the Anglo-global world and spaces in between. It was clear from discussion with all sectors of the community that the greatest problem facing students wishing to live in both worlds and the space in between was the relationship of initiation ceremony to school. It was decided that, as a matter of policy, the College would seek to situate the study and experience of Warumungu culture within its programs in a way that allows it to attract appropriate academic credit. As an example, under this policy the College would expect to grant academic credit for the six weeks of men's initiation ceremony.

We planned curriculum policy that would require the College to seek to further economic "survival ways of knowing" by creating its own cross-curriculum priorities in pre-vocational education. We planned to do this in all subject areas by privileging learning relevant to: rural operations; tourism and hospitality; and land management in such a way that students would acquire motivation and background knowledge that would lead to success in vocational courses delivered by external providers under the auspices of the College at appropriate stages in student's development. We planned College capacity to develop significant programs, which in other schools would be classified as co-curricular but which in this College constitute the school's reason for being. These programs would have their genesis in the College's responsibilities to Warumungu language and culture and to the fostering of involvement in Manungurra Corporation's economic and cultural objectives. It is intended that, in practice, the delivery of these programs across the boarding school would be seamless and that, from a pedagogical perspective, there would be no differentiation between the curricula and the co-curricular.

### **A SCHOOL MOCK-UP**

For the purposes of the registration application and to provide a place for the school to undertake its mission, we described how we envisaged the school might look in action. What follows is a description of the key aspects of this yet-to-exist school that were the subject of advice by CF & SP Baker Consultants and Chloe Parkinson. Missing from this paper are



architectural aspects of the school such as its tradition-based classroom and living arrangements based on ‘secret’ knowledge that were properly determined with Bennett Design. My only input into these aspects was to advise that the design adopted for plant and buildings could be used to deliver government mandated education outcomes.

### **A Curriculum Envisaged**

#### ***Middle School - Years 7 to 9***

The Year 7 - 9 class group will operate in multi-grade classrooms in which the two curricula are used: the Australian Curriculum and NTCF. Australian Curriculum subjects to be implemented are:

- English
- Mathematics
- Science - History

Permission was sought from NTDECS to acquire and use the NT Scope and Sequence documents created for multi-grade classrooms in the NT for the above Australian Curriculum subjects. The Scope and Sequence documents set out term-by-term the content descriptors for each subject to be studied. The use of these Scope and Sequence documents satisfies Manungurra College's requirements to implement the Australian Curriculum but, more importantly, ensure continuity for students transferring to and from other NT schooling environments. When applying the Scope and Sequence for the above subject areas, emphasis is placed upon the Warumungu culture and, as much as possible, incorporation of rural, tourism, hospitality, and land management. A mathematics unit on “Using Units of Measurement” for example may see significant learning taking place in the horse yard. Mathematics could see an investigation taking place on the range of a spear or boomerang. Investigations within history could take place on the movement of local people and cattle station history. The production of bush medicine might be the focus of a procedural text in science. Appropriate inclusion of Aboriginal knowledge will be guided by Aboriginal staff.

#### ***Year 10***

Year 10 is recognised as the preparation year for students going on to complete their Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training (NTCET) in the senior years of schooling and, as such, needs to be treated somewhat differently to the middle (7-9) and Senior Secondary (11-12) units within the school. The Year 10 curriculum follows the advice of NTDECS in that the following compulsory core subjects from the Australian Curriculum were to be offered to students:

- English and NT Year 10 Literacy
- Mathematics and NT Year 10 Numeracy
- Science - History

These subjects were to be imported by jointly enrolling students with NTOEC to ensure that the subjects satisfy Australian Curriculum requirements. They were modified, if necessary, in collaboration with NTOEC and College staff to ensure that the content matches the College's mission. It was recognised that by the proposed opening of Manungurra College in January 2015, Australian Curriculum subjects such as geography, the arts, health and physical

## *An Aboriginal College for a Return to Country*

education, and technologies would be ready for implementation and the following were proposed:

- Studies of society and environment (excluding time, continuity and change) - The arts
- Health and physical education
- Technology and design
- Indigenous language and culture

Students would also undertake Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan (PLP). This subject is recognised within the (NTCET as a 10-credit subject. It is normally completed in Year 10, as it assists students in planning for their future and with subject selection for Years 11 and 12. In order to complete the PLP students will be jointly enrolled with NTOEC. The Year 10 students would operate within multiple classrooms and outdoor learning environments dependent upon the subject or learning area. For the majority of lessons, Year 10 students would be in the same classroom as the Senior Secondary School, as both groups of students were to study PLP, and NTOEC-based English and mathematics. Year 10 students would study the remaining Australian Curriculum subjects separately. Year 10 and Senior Secondary students could participate in Indigenous language and culture together, if deemed appropriate by the Indigenous Language and Culture teacher.

### ***Senior Secondary School - Years 11 to 12***

Senior Secondary students enrolled at Manungurra College were to be jointly enrolled with NTOEC. NTOEC would provide SACE-registered subjects for students, to assist the College in offering Year 11 and 12 students with an education leading to a NTCET. It was envisioned that in the first Semester of operation, Senior Secondary students would be enrolled in the following subjects:

- Stage 1 - Personal Learning Plan
- Stage 1 - Subject from English learning area
- Stage 1 - Subject from mathematics learning area

Two further Stage 1 subjects would be added, based on student interest and school capacity. The NTOEC subjects would be supplemented with those offered by the school:

- Studies of society and environment (excluding time, continuity and change) - The arts
- Health and physical education
- Technology and design
- Indigenous language and culture

### **Indigenous language and culture**

As long as it was to be possible, Manungurra College would utilise both NTCF and Australian Curriculum approaches to the teaching of Indigenous language and culture – as a subject and as a cross-curriculum priority. The Indigenous language and culture subject within the NTCF was to continue to be taught as the Australian Curriculum was gradually introduced. Concurrently, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and culture cross-curriculum priority was to be embedded across the subject areas. It is crucial here to recognise that whilst the Australian Curriculum has been developed for all students, it is a document predominantly produced within and for mainstream Anglo-Australian educational contexts. It has not been designed specifically for remote Aboriginal students or schools. The cross curriculum priority

focus was to be key in linking curriculum content to Manungurra students' knowledge and experiences to enhance student understanding of the Warumungu World, Anglo-Global World and the cultural interface at which they both meet. Aboriginal (Warumungu) staff were understood to be critical in this process, to provide guidance in creating these meaningful links and to avoid the trivialisation or superficial box-ticking of Aboriginal knowledge and culture.

Student participation in ceremony and cultural events was envisaged to be credited in the same way that mainstream student excursions to another culture would be accredited. Student absence for ceremony was to be assessed within the Indigenous Language and Culture subject of the NTCF, with community members providing input as to which outcomes had been satisfied by the absence.

## **CONCLUSION**

My planning role was over when I handed a draft plan for the establishment of a College to MAC's operations manager. It was her task to ensure that the school's governance arrangements complied with legislation governing Aboriginal Corporations and were compatible with MAC's administrative and financial arrangements. Thus augmented, the plan went to the Board which, on approval, passed it to MAC's CEO who formally submitted it to the Northern Territory Department along with a formal request to register a school.

My tentative conclusion from my experience with the design of Manungurra College is that it is possible to design a school to equip students to live the Aboriginal and mainstream Australian worlds and the space in between. What has yet to happen is that the mainstream world grants Manungurra College, and other similar projects, the right to exist in the form of registration and funding for both capital expenditure and operational ongoing costs.

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